Damascus – 06 April 2016 – With US$ 20 million funding support to WHO humanitarian response in the Syrian crisis, the Kuwaiti Government has boosted the provision of treatments for life-threatening chronic diseases in Syria.

“The Kuwaiti fund is being used to provide treatments for people with life-threatening diseases, such as diabetes, kidney failure, asthma, epilepsy, cancer and cardiovascular illness” says Ms Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative to Syria.

People with chronic diseases are at increased risk of dying or developing complications as access to medications is restricted due to shortages or as a result of restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict. Kuwait provides sizeable funding which enables WHO to fill the urgent gaps for insulin and other life-saving medicines through interagency convoys, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and national nongovernmental organizations.

For example, WHO-procured insulin is provided in a SARC clinic in Big Orem, rural western Aleppo. “My 9-year-old son, Mohammed, diagnosed with type 1 diabetes lived without regular medication due to the internal displacement. But now he gets regular insulin for his treatment from a SARC clinic,” says Mohammed’s mother Ibtisam.

With improved access to people in need in hard-to-reach and besieged locations, the need for chronic disease medicines has increased tremendously. “The funding support is critical to our response efforts as it allows the delivery of critical life-saving medicines and supplies to millions of people in need across Syria”, says Ms Hoff.

About US$ 12.8 million of this funding is being utilized to provide chronic disease medicines for the people in need in Syria while US$ 7.2 million supports Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries.

It is estimated that the burden of noncommunicable diseases in Syria is responsible for 45.8% of all deaths: cardiovascular diseases (28.2%), cancers (10.0%), respiratory diseases (1.8%) and diabetes mellitus (0.8%). As a result, 19% of adults aged 30–70 years have a probability of dying from the 4 main noncommunicable diseases. Raised blood pressure affects 24.9% of the
adult population over 18 years while obesity affects 27.1% of the population.